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BRIEFING NOTES

Briefing on NIE 11-3/8-75, "Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Conflict Through the Mid-1980s"

For the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, 0900, 4 December 1975, Executive Office Building

1. Introduction

In response to our guidance as to the Board's desires, our purpose during this 90 minute session is to convey to you, in about 45 minutes, the substance of this year's estimate of Soviet strategic forces, and to use the remainder of the time to discuss the Board's recommendations to the President for revising the production process for NIE 11-3/8.

I will first express the principal message of this year's estimate, discuss its key judgments and the reasons for them, and finally, describe the ways in which we have responded to key concerns expressed to us by consumers, including areas in which the Board expressed concern in its August letter to the President.

2. The Principal Message of NIE 11-3/8-75

While our judgments about developments in Soviet strategic forces have not changed markedly since last year, our descriptions of the breadth and vigor of Soviet strategic weapons programs, unabated by detente and arms limi-

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tations, combine to convey a more pessimistic outlook for the future than conveyed last year.

a. Developments for special attention. At the outset of our Key Judgments, we have been more specific than in last year's estimate, in calling special attention to current and prospective developments which could markedly increase Soviet strategic capabilities. Large increases in missile warheads and a growing threat to Minuteman are clearly foreseeable; the advances that we estimate in strategic defenses are less certain.

b. The future strategic environment. Also at the outset, in this year's estimate, we call special attention to the large uncertainties in some aspects of Soviet strategic policy and forces, which affect our confidence about the strategic environment over the next ten years. Having reexamined, we reaffirm last year's judgment that

- During the next ten years, the Soviets almost certainly will not have the capability in unrestrained nuclear war to prevent devastating retaliation by the United States.
- Short of this, however, Soviet strategic programs present what we believe are real and more proximate dangers to the United States -- with or without a SALT TWO agreement. We think there

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WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

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2 DEC 1975

Admiral George W. Anderson, Jr., USN (Ret.)
Chairman, President's Foreign Intelligence
Advisory Board
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear George:

In your letter of August 8, 1975, to the President you made some criticisms of last year's National Intelligence Estimate 11-3/8-74, "Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Conflict Through 1985." The letter is, of course, a fine example of your independent assessment of our intelligence product and advice to the President with respect to it.

Stemming from that letter, Brent Scowcroft requested my comments on certain recommendations for change in the current National Intelligence Estimate process. I responded to this in my letter to the President of 21 November 1975, a copy of which I made available to you. In this letter, I took some issue with the conclusions in your August 8, 1975, letter with respect to last year's National Intelligence Estimate. I pointed out that I had received the August letter only on 9 September, too far along in this year's NIE 11-3/8 process to divert the talents from that priority Estimate to respond to your August comments in detail. I suggested also that an examination of the 1975 Estimate might lead you to a different conclusion than you reached with respect to the 1974 Estimate.

At the same time, I believe that the statements in your August letter were so sweeping that they deserved a very specific response from our experts. I consequently requested them to develop the attached comments reflecting the statements about specific Soviet technical developments made in your August letter. I am sure we will have a chance to discuss these at our forthcoming meeting, and I believe these comments might help us to fix on specific matters at issue.

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I am sending a copy of this to Brent Scowcroft, as I am concerned that the President might otherwise suffer under a very erroneous impression of the accuracy and seriousness of both the 1974 and the 1975 Estimates on this important subject.

Sincerely,

/s/ Bill

W. E. Colby

Attachment

cc: Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs

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LETTER to PFIAB re comments on the PFIAB letter to the President

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